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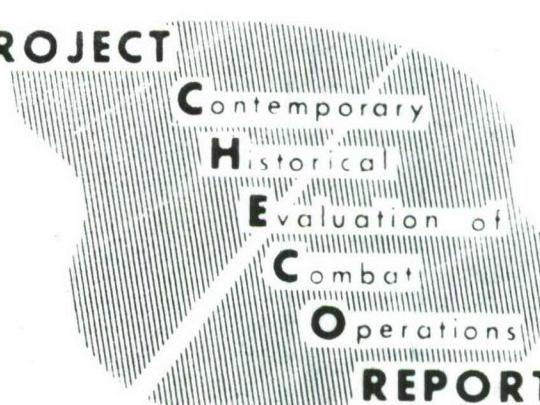
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Contemporary
Historical
Evaluation of
Combat
Operations
REPORT

TRUSCOTT WHITE

11 DECEMBER 1968

HQ PACAF

**Directorate, Tactical Evaluation
CHECO Division**

Prepared by: LT. COL. R. A. MACDONOUGH

Project CHECO 7th AF, DOAC

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
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FOR THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren H. Peterson".

WARREN H. PETERSON, Colonel, USAF
Chief, CHECO Division
Directorate, Tactical Evaluation
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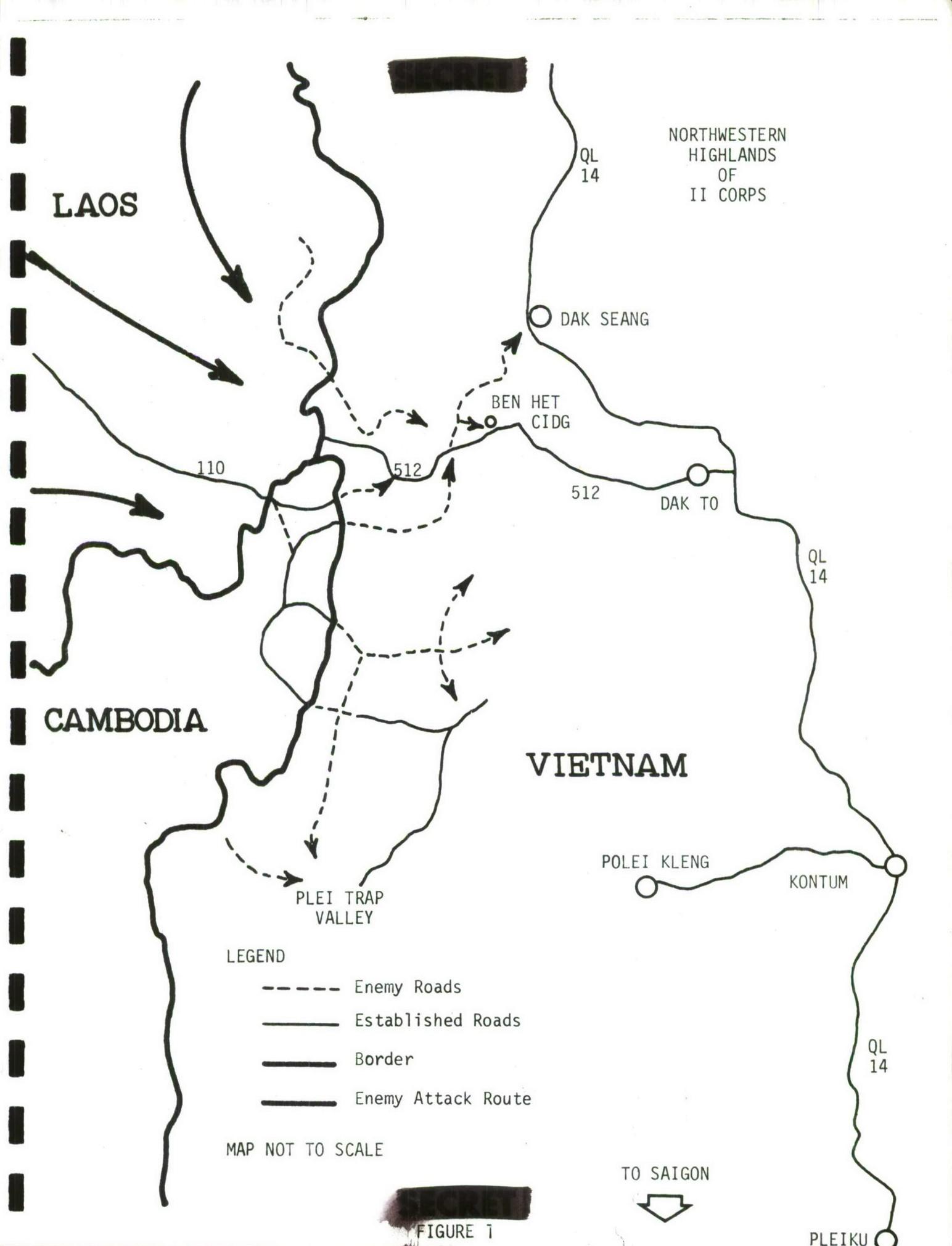
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FOREWORD

In May 1968, Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, Jr., Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, reported a major push by two North Vietnamese Army divisions in the Central Highlands was smashed by B-52 bombers "before it could get started". These words introduce one of the most dramatically successful Allied operations in the Vietnam conflict.^{1/}

In mid-May 1968, the enemy massed two divisions, the 325th from the Khe Sanh area and the 1st from the Kontum-Pleiku area, to overrun Allied positions in mountainous Kontum Province. This was double the force that was originally engaged around Dak To in the bitter fighting for the strategic hills in that area in November 1967. Based on what General Abrams called "solid intelligence", B-52s were requested for mass strikes, breaking up enemy concentrations and forcing a retreat across the Cambodian border to his sanctuary. In his major effort, the enemy was able to launch but one ground attack and a few attacks by fire against Allied fire support bases.

"TRUSCOTT WHITE" details the action required in employing airpower in this significant campaign, and emphasizes B-52 operations and tactical airstrikes. This report shows how ARC LIGHT strikes contributed more significantly to the success of Operation MATHEWS, the Army ground operation within TRUSCOTT WHITE, than to any previous 4th Infantry Division operation.^{2/}



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CHAPTER I

CONCEPT AND STRATEGY

A very successful air interdiction and ground offensive campaign was completed in June 1968, in the northwestern highlands of II Corps near Dak To. The area of operation is bounded on the west by the Cambodian/Laotian border, on the east by the provincial capitals of Pleiku and Kontum, and the strategic town of Dak To on the north. The terrain is traversed from north to south by the Dak Se/Dak Poko Valley. Mountains in the area rise as high as 7,000 feet on either side of the valley and are covered by thick, double-canopied jungle.

Early in the spring of 1968, several significant events combined to alert U.S. and Army of Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) forces to the enemy's possible future moves. The successful defense of Khe Sanh had resulted in the withdrawal of several large enemy units, which could be used elsewhere. The partial bombing halt in North Vietnam was expected to result in increased infiltration; the enemy might seek significant military victories to enhance his bargaining position in the Paris negotiations. In addition, many friendly units had been withdrawn from the Central Highlands as a result of the Communist TET Offensive. The approaching monsoon season would make troop movement and resupply activities very difficult, and therefore, any major enemy offensive into the Central Highlands would have to start in March or April.^{1/}

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Since January 1968, friendly Intelligence had been reporting enemy road building activity, troop movements, and base camp construction in the area west of Dak To. FACs had been reporting almost daily sightings of new road and bridge construction in this area. The enemy was obviously adding new, all-weather roads to an already efficient 700-mile road net and logistic system. These routes supported infiltration of troops and supplies through the Demilitarized Zone or across Laos and through Cambodia. Of strategic interest were the new routes discovered west of Dak To and Pleiku. Aimed at the provincial capitals of Kontum and Pleiku, they would give the enemy high-speed motorable roads on which to support a major attack on the Central Highlands. Also, the enemy was constructing a major extension of Route 110 running from Laos through the northern tip of Cambodia into Kontum Province. The significance of this developing road system was immense. Intelligence reports indicated that after making allowances for operational commitments the enemy was infiltrating as much as 155 tons of material a day over the established road network. 2/

If the North Vietnamese were allowed to continue unchecked, they would soon drive their road net northeast to Highway 14, the second most important north-south road in South Vietnam. Moving eastward along Route 512, the enemy could easily bring overwhelming pressure against the strategically placed town of Dak To. Should Dak To fall to the enemy, the gateway to the northern half of Vietnam would be opened, and the DMZ could be pressured from the south as well as from the north. More importantly, the enemy could sweep down Highway 14 to the provincial

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capitals of Kontum and Pleiku, and thus control all the Central Highlands. It was obvious to Air Force and Army Intelligence personnel ^{3/} that this threat from the tri-border area must be stopped.

To counter this threat, in March 1968, both the USAF and Army instituted priority intelligence-gathering efforts consisting of aerial photo reconnaissance, Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols (LRRP), Visual Reconnaissance (VR) by fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, ARDF, and prisoner interrogations. The intelligence gathered clearly showed that the enemy was making a major effort to construct roads and bridges which would be usable during the entire monsoon season. NVA soldiers captured were identified as members of the 325th NVA Division, which had moved south from Khe Sanh. The redeployment of division-size units underscored the enemy's determination to make a major push in this area in the near ^{4/} future.

In April 1968, the U.S. Army began Operation TRUSCOTT WHITE in an area west and southwest of Dak To and toward the Laotian and Cambodian borders. The objective of this operation was to "deny the enemy the unrestricted use of the road net by destroying his installations, personnel, and equipment". In the 4th Infantry Division operations plan, tactical airpower was programmed, along with artillery, defoliation, chemical warfare, B-52 strikes, electronic and visual reconnaissance equipment, reconnaissance patrols, and primary ground units to locate, harass, and destroy the enemy equipment and troops. The flexibility

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and tremendous weight of firepower delivered by the USAF met and sur-
5/
passed this goal.

The Air Force effort assumed a far greater role than was originally planned for TRUSCOTT WHITE. It must be emphasized that this campaign was a jointly-coordinated Air Force and Army effort. Seventh Air Force, however, considered this campaign to be the highest priority mission in
6/
South Vietnam, and the results later justified this emphasis.

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CHAPTER II
ARC LIGHT STRIKES

Summary of Enemy Situation

The enemy border road system consisted of one north-south segment, entering RVN in the vicinity of YB 723063 and extending south to the vicinity of YA 667715, with two extensions to the east from the north-south road. One began at YB 735041 and the other at YA 752909. Daily, this road system was being extended, farther south and east, and improved to accept a greater truck capacity. There were numerous confirmed reports from aerial VR and LRRPs operating in the area, of trucks using the road for movement of troops and supplies. There were also repeated instances of troops being sighted along the road. On 14 March, a company size unit was sighted working on the road. The numerous prepared defensive positions, bivouac areas, and supply points clearly indicated the planned permanency of the road system.

The amount of ground-to-air fire from automatic and antiaircraft weapons indicated the enemy's determination to protect the road. This road provided the enemy with a high-speed, heavy-duty vehicular highway from the tri-border area south, deep into the Plei Trap Valley. The southernmost terminal of the road was only 32 kilometers from the Se San River and 32 kilometers from New Plei Djereng. The two confirmed extensions to the east terminated north and west of Polei Kleng. In addition to the greatly increased capability to rapidly infiltrate large forces into RVN, the road system provided the enemy a similarly

[REDACTED]

increased capability to shift troops from the Ben Het/Dak To area to
the Pleiku City area within a matter of hours.^{2/}

Campaign of Interdiction

Tactical air operations were required by the 4th Infantry Division within the limits of the MAC ARTHUR area of operation to prevent unrestricted use of the road network, hamper the buildup of supplies by the NVA, delay road building operations, suppress AA positions, and interdict the existing road.^{3/}

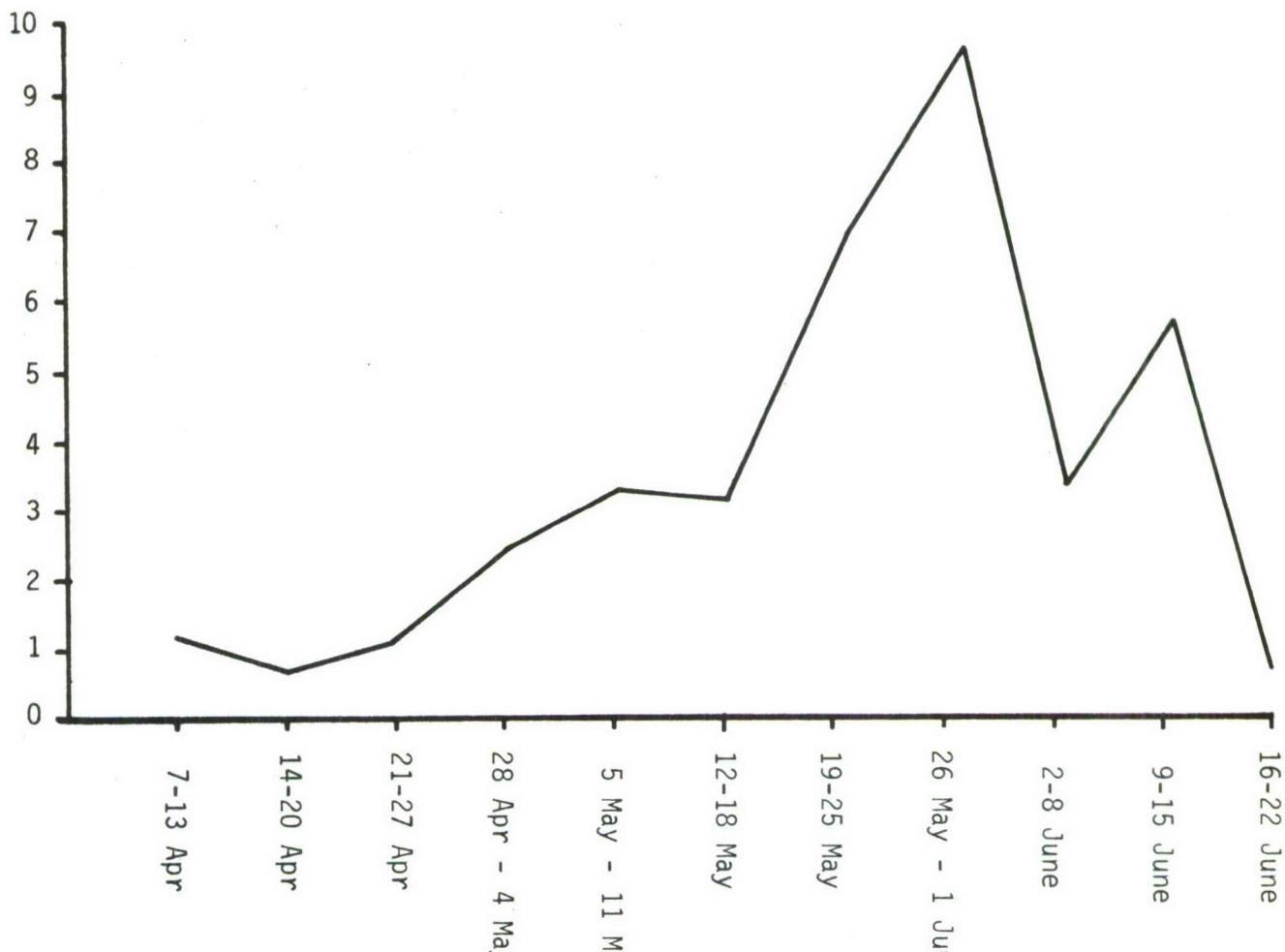
The OPlan called for tactical airstrikes on road choke points, truck parks, bridges, supply points, and antiaircraft position. The campaign of interdiction began on 7 April 1968 and lasted until 22 June.

One of the major achievements of this campaign was the tremendous firepower placed on an enemy, who was constantly on the move shifting his bases, material, and troops. The teamwork demonstrated by the Air Force and Army was outstanding in that Allied forces were able to hit enemy positions with a tremendous sustained rate of airstrikes and artillery bombardment. For example, there were 1,261 ARC LIGHT sorties flown in a two-and-one-half month period, with 35,308 tons of ordnance expended.^{4/} (Fig. 2.)

Col. Joseph Fix, Commander, 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division,
^{5/} stated the situation:

TONS
IN
THOUSANDS

B-52 TONNAGE



B-52 Average-28 Tons Per Sortie
35,308 Tons Total

FIGURE 2

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"Now at this point I think the Air Force can take exceptional satisfaction in the ARC LIGHT missions, because they were used in a tactical role, not in the strategic interdiction mission, but in the classic tactical support of troops on the ground. We brought them in as close as 1,500 meters, in some cases. If you were to ever experience an ARC LIGHT up close, within 1,500 meters, as I have, it is as close as I ever want to be. It is a horrendous psychological weapon, and I thought at the time that Nagasaki and Hiroshima must have been like this when all of a sudden the peace and quiet of the jungle erupted into terrible nerve-shattering explosions and all hell seems to erupt. For the enemy to live under this threat must be a fantastic psychological problem for their leaders to overcome and their soldiers to accept. Even if they live through it, they cannot escape without some minor concussion problems, and the psychological effect must be terrible when they come out of their bunkers and see the destruction wrought by these strikes that came without any warning....

"According to my figures, in the month of May 1968, we put in about 98 ARC LIGHT strikes, totaling almost 600 aircraft sorties. I don't have it at my fingertips right now - the amount of sorties that went in from 1-15 June, but it was a tremendous amount and I suspect it was close to 500 sorties that went into this (actually 377 sorties). So there was this fantastic amount of firepower that could be dropped and covered this huge area on a minute's notice, around the clock, and they just constantly heckled and harassed him...in all his assembly areas."

The key point of the entire campaign was that the Army controlled the high ground west of Dak To and Kontum, and the enemy was forced to mass troops to attack any key fire support bases located in the mountains. U.S. reconnaissance efforts were successful in keeping close watch on all enemy movements and finding his base camps in the thick jungle. Therefore, when the enemy did attempt to mass his troops for

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an attack, he was almost always hit immediately by tactical air or ARC LIGHT strikes. The airstrikes spoiled his efforts before he could launch the attack, and he was forced to move to another location to resupply and regroup.

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Colonel Fix commented on this phase of the operation as follows:

"We know the terrain better than the enemy and, based on his past performance, we were able to predict where he would go and that is exactly what he did. So, to set the stage from the Army side, we held the critical terrain, we had magnificent artillery support and we had tremendous knowledge of the enemy's capabilities and past performance in this area. Once this was set then you got into one of the finest examples of joint teamwork I have ever seen. It was not a question of whether the artillery was going to fire on the target or whether we were going to use airpower, and if airpower was going to be ARC LIGHT or tactical air, but it was a question of how we could hurt the enemy the most.

"The enemy had to expose himself to constant surveillance from both the Army and Air Force. We knew if we saw him in one area generally where he would go, so we could track him almost foot by foot...So he was moving from his secure bases into an area where he was under constant surveillance and he was faced with the foreknowledge that the critical terrain that he had operated in before no longer belonged to him. Therefore, he was forced to mass in less desirous areas. He no longer could travel with impunity the twenty-five clicks (25 kilometers) or so from the border to Dak To and get up into the high ground around us. As soon as he came across that border we knew where he was at, as he came closer in, he was meeting our advance fire bases...."

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TRUSCOTT WHITE

| | <u>TOTALS</u> |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| B-52 Missions | 233 |
| B-52 Sorties | 1,261 |
| B-52 Missions with BDA | 91 |
| Secondary Explosions | 346 |
| Bunkers, Trenches, Fighting Positions | 1,045 |
| Automatic Weapons Position (AA Sites) | 25 |
| Bridges/Roads-Damage or Destruction | 10 |

SOURCES OF BOMB DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Visual Recon | 46 |
| Strike Crew | 59 |
| Helicopter Recon | 4 |
| Photo Inter Report | 1 |
| Prisoner Report | 1 |
| Ground Follow-up | 1 |

FIGURE 3

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The battering of enemy supply routes and base camps continued relentlessly from 7 April through 25 May 1968. Around-the-clock use of airpower and artillery had reduced the enemy traffic to a standstill. Motor carrier operation had been replaced by foot traffic, and the enemy supply effort had been seriously curtailed. His laboriously constructed roads and bridges lay in ruins in most strategic locations. The survivors of this relentless pounding were forced to devote most of their time to repair, salvage, and defense instead of offensive movement.

The ARC LIGHT strikes were particularly devastating at some of the choke points. In one key area, west of Dak To (YB771239), the entire contour of the land was completely altered by the concentrated bombing. What was once dense jungle pierced by a creek bed with thickly covered mountains on both sides, became nothing more than barren, pockmarked desert. Even the stream bed had been diverted by the landslides caused by the 750-pound bombs. An Air Force FAC of the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, described the area:

7/
"The choke points were struck repeatedly and, to the best of my knowledge, this was very successful in creating a blockade in the area. Coincidentally with the destruction of the choke point, and the denial of the use of the road to the enemy, the XM-41 GRAVEL mine was employed approximately three KM east of the Cambodian border to deny that area to the enemy."

The continuing problem of bomb damage assessment (BDA) was evidenced again during TRUSCOTT WHITE. From a total of 233 B-52 missions flown (Fig. 3), there were BDA results on only 91 missions, or 39 percent

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of the total. These results, however, showed a total of 346 secondary explosions, 1,045 bunkers, trenches, and fighting positions damaged or destroyed, but only 25 automatic weapons/antiaircraft sites damaged or destroyed. Only ten bridges or roads were damaged by this heavy bombardment.

The ALO of the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, stated the actual interdiction of the road was planned to be accomplished primarily through tactical air and ARC LIGHT missions.

The problem of BDA was vividly portrayed by the ARC LIGHT statistics for this campaign. Although the most accurate and timely BDA is accomplished by a ground follow-up by infantry, there was evidence of only one mission that had any ground follow-up report. The second best method was helicopter recon, but there were only four such missions flown. The generally accepted method for BDA acquisition employed in Vietnam was for the FACs to VR the area as soon as possible after the strike. This method had many shortcomings. As far as the FACs were concerned, BDA had a low priority, since their primary function was to seek out new targets and to control tactical airstrikes. Also, it was very difficult for a FAC, flying an aircraft in circles over a large, devastated area, while looking through binoculars, to accurately count bunkers, trucks, trenches, equipment, and bodies destroyed and damaged by bombs. At best, he could only estimate the results.

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Most of the ARC LIGHT BDA was generated by the strike crew, who counted the secondary explosions and estimated their intensity, while flying at extremely high altitudes. These results were useful, however, as they proved there were enemy storage areas, food, and munitions within the target box. The color and intensity of the secondary fires also were valuable intelligence devices for determining the quantity and type of equipment destroyed in the attack. Nevertheless, not all important enemy targets, such as fortified positions and base camps, would have secondary fires generated by the bombing attack, and therefore, only ground reconnaissance units or low-flying helicopters could adequately assess the true bomb damage.

Maj. Eugene Carnahan, FAC, 21st TASS, highlighted the problem all ^{10/} the FACs had during this campaign:

"There were so many ARC LIGHTs that went in there that we got forty to fifty ARC LIGHTs behind our BDA. It got to the point that there was absolutely no way to BDA an individual ARC LIGHT strike because there were just too many of them. They were just laid right on top of one another."

The 4th Infantry Division Operational Report, prepared after the campaign, attributed much of the success of the campaign to the ARC ^{11/} LIGHT strikes:

"ARC LIGHTs were employed in mass for the first time in the Division area of operations and were closely coordinated with the scheme of maneuver"

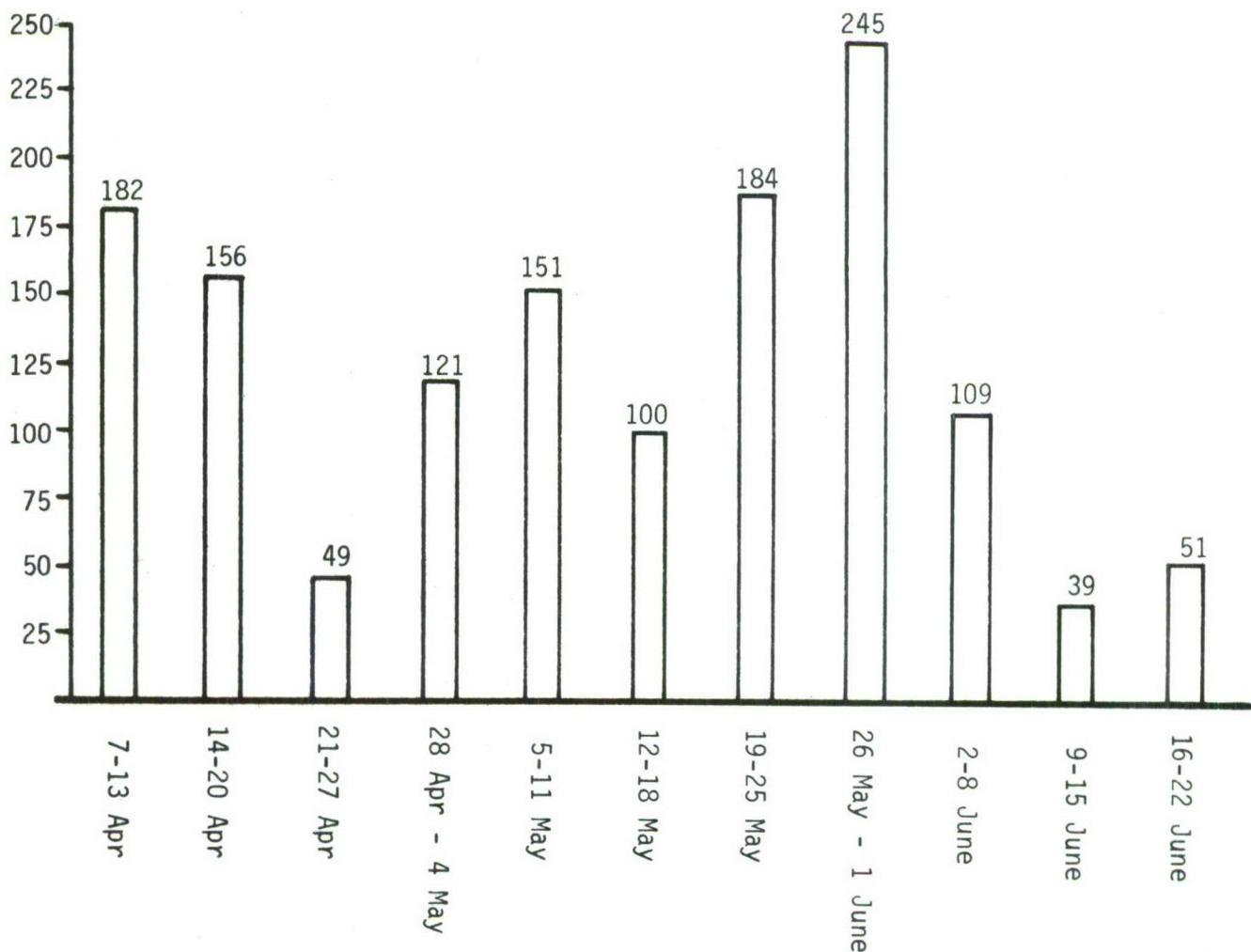
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and other fire support means. These strikes proved to be a major factor in the attrition of enemy forces and caused him to abandon his mission of overrunning friendly positions in the Dak Pek and the Dak To-Ben Het area. Although single ARC LIGHTs had been planned on enemy targets previously, the grouping of several ARC LIGHTs in one area and over short time spans created a devastating effect on the enemy."

TACTICAL AIR SORTIES

SORTIES

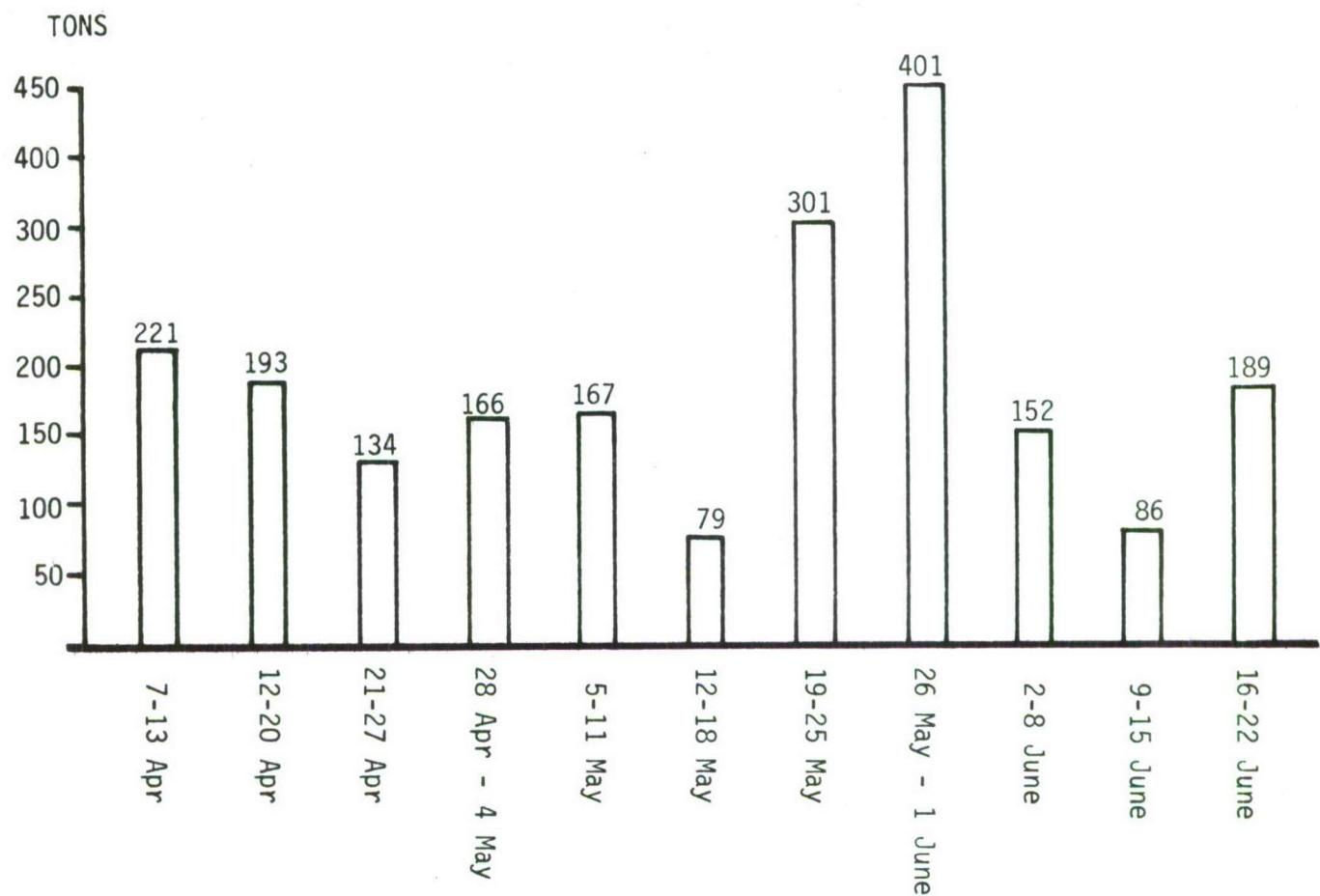


1,387 Total Tactical Sorties

FIGURE 4

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TACTICAL AIR TONNAGE



Total Tonnage by Tactical Air = 2,089 Tons

FIGURE 5

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CHAPTER III

TACTICAL AIR

A brief summary of the intelligence information, as found in the 4th Infantry Division OPlan, provided a clear picture of the enemy threat to the roads in the area. One Intelligence sighting is quoted as follows:

"On 29 March 1968, U.S. personnel at Ben Het observed an estimated 200 enemy troops moving along Route 512 at YB 863245. Air reconnaissance on 30 March revealed the column had come directly down the Bet Het border road. (Route 512)."

The OPlan continued:

"The Ben Het border road has been used by tracked vehicles. On 12 April, 1st Brigade LRRP team reported finding tracked vehicle tracks in the vicinity of YB 780220 and YB 778221. No tracked vehicles have been sighted on the road. The enemy could introduce armor into the area of Ben Het border road."

There were 390 tactical air sorties planned in the OPlan, but when the final tally was made for TRUSCOTT WHITE, the total reached 1,387 sorties. (Fig. 4.) During the campaign, 0-1 and 0-2 spotter aircraft and photo intelligence aircraft continually located new targets, which were fed to the Intelligence Section. As new targets were developed, the daily request for tactical air missions rose at an outstanding rate. (Figs. 4 & 5.) All forms of firepower were used, including

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artillery, F-100s, F-105s, F-4Cs, A-1Es, C-130s, and helicopters. Aerial mining was accomplished in many key segments of the road net. Also, 250 drums of C-1 and C-2 CS gas were dropped by C-130 cargo aircraft at strategic choke points. Defoliation missions were flown by UC-123 aircraft and were highly effective in uncovering enemy sanctuaries. The Air Force effort reached a final peak in mid-May with 401 sorties by tactical air.

A DASC Alpha IFFV narrative report stated: ^{3/}

"From mid-May to the beginning of June the Air Force rained upon the enemy the destructive power which approached the level seen at the historic defense of Khe Sanh. However, in the final week, the air delivered firepower exceeded the level of that campaign."

The significance of this achievement is better understood when the concepts of the two campaigns are compared. In the battle of Khe Sanh, one large force had another force under siege, and the battle was one of static defense. In the TRUSCOTT WHITE operation, the enemy was constantly moving, shifting his forces from one sanctuary to another in an effort to mass his troops for a decisive attack. This attack never developed because Air Force and Army Intelligence were able to pinpoint his every move. The result was massive airpower and artillery attacks that stalled his efforts. For example, the total tonnage of bombs delivered (37,307 tons) ranks as the second heaviest bombardment of the war. ^{4/}

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Although the main emphasis of the attack was the area west of Dak To on both sides of Route 512, there were many tactical airstrikes against road construction efforts as far south as the Plei Trap Valley, 30 miles west of Kontum City. In addition, base camps and troop concentrations were kept under pressure 30 to 40 miles west and northwest of Kontum. A significant interdiction effort by fighter-bombers was flown against roads in the far northwest corner of II Corps Tactical Zone, west of Dak Pek, which was extremely effective in deterring enemy reinforcements from reaching the main battle zone.^{5/}

In spite of the success of the overall tactical air efforts, the problem of targeting was significant in the early stages. Comments made ^{6/} by the FACs, who worked the fighter strikes, highlight this issue:

"The Army built a fine plan for interdicting the road, depicting the numbers of strikes to be flown on each point; i.e., bridges, choke points, storage areas, truck parks, gun sites, etc., and they laid these out with exact coordinates to the nearest ten meters. When it came time to implement the plans we would be given a set of coordinates and a target description. Then we'd go out there and wouldn't find anything....We'd have to look around and we would find somewhere about 500 to 1,000 meters away a bridge or bunker or something that resembled the target description. We would then ask for permission to move the airstrike and, at first, we were denied permission. Later, they did allow us to move up to 100 meters, without prior approval, in order to move the ordnance onto the target."

Another FAC made the following comments on the same problem:^{7/}

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"We ran into several instances where the road had been misplotted and we had to strike coordinates because they did not coincide with the road to any known target on that particular grid. This raised a small problem in the early phases of the interdiction program in that we would have to adjust the target coordinates to a suspected position, or over on the road where the coordinates were obviously meant for. But, in the early weeks of the program, the actual trace of the road was inaccurate and, consequently, it took a concerted effort by the FACs to move the targets over to the correct target areas or on the road itself. Quite often you would be guessing at the target because there was absolutely nothing on the target grid. So you would have to hunt within 400 to 500 meters to find a target and, consequently, the ordnance was often delivered on suspected locations or non-profitable areas."

The tactical air phase reached its peak during the week of 26 May, when MACV inaugurated "Operation MATHEWS", a two-week ground campaign designed to destroy elements of the 325th NVA Division west of Dak To. Tactical air was used to prepare landing zones and soften enemy positions prior to attack by friendly units. During this climactic week, 245 sorties expended 401 tons of assorted ordnance on enemy positions. Around-the-clock capability was maintained through COMBAT SKYSPOT ground-controlled radar techniques, which enabled the fighter bombers to strike the enemy regardless of weather conditions. After this peak effort, the tactical air phase rapidly decreased as the ground effort came to a close.

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CHAPTER IV

SUPPORTING OPERATIONS

During the 11-week period of the campaign, there were 1,387 tactical air sorties flown, delivering 2,089 tons of ordnance. (Figs. 4 and 5.) Air Force FACs put in 72 percent of this ordnance, while the remaining 28 percent was controlled by COMBAT SKYSPOT radar techniques. All types of ordnance were delivered; bombs from 250 lbs. to 2,000 lbs., napalm, ^{1/} rockets, 20mm strafing attacks, and cluster bomb units (CBU). Gravel Mines were used successfully in two key areas at YB 746040 and YB 762215. There were 116 sorties flown, delivering the XM-41 Gravel Mine to two ^{2/} general target areas.

Maj. Eugene Carnahan, FAC of 21st TASS, expressed his opinion on ^{3/} the effectiveness of the Gravel operations as follows:

"Gravel Mines (XM-41) were delivered by A-1Es out of Nakhon Phanom. I don't know how many sorties were expended on the east-west road, but they were highly successful. We got good road cuts immediately and traffic slowed down or stopped almost immediately. But they (the enemy) were rebuilding it constantly. We just kept pounding them, and kept the cuts in there."

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CS Bulk Drum Drops

Two of the largest bulk drum drops of persistant chemical agent (CS-1) were successfully accomplished during TRUSCOTT WHITE. The first experimental drop took place on 28 May 68, when four C-130 aircraft dropped a total of 256 drums of bulk CS on the northern road in the

vicinity of YB 9085. The aircraft loads were on target, detonating under the canopy and resulting in 75 percent effectiveness. Approximately one-third of one aircraft load detonated above the canopy, due to release ^{4/} at a higher altitude than planned, causing the CS to dissipate.

"Based on TRUSCOTT WHITE and 4th Inf Div reports and photography, the area in which the CS was dropped apparently resulted in denial for 9 days. (Earliest activity reported on road is 7 June.)"

Again on 2 June, three C-130 aircraft dropped a total of 192 drums of bulk CS on QL-14, vic (YB 9384,9485,9484) near the intersection of the Northern Road. The targets were three choke points which had been cut by tactical air strikes. All drums were on target, all detonated under the canopy, or just above the ground, and neither duds nor premature detonation was noted. The Forward Air Controller reported 100 percent effectiveness, and aerial photographs taken immediately following ^{5/} the drop confirmed the FAC reports.

As a result of this drop, the choke points were not used nor were repairs attempted for a period of 14 days.

The following comments and observations are quoted from the COC-7 ^{6/} (MACV) Report:

"Both operations proved the feasibility of accurately dropping large quantities of bulk CS on specific targets."

"Weather was the limiting factor in both drops because of heavy rainfall subsequent to the drops. CS-1 is rapidly dissipated by rain."

The new CS-2 programmed for RVN in July or August 68 is not affected by moisture and is considered twice as persistent as CS-1.

"The experimental XM 920EZ fuze and burster used to detonate the drums, seemed to perform satisfactorily but required a thoroughly trained individual to set and install, to insure proper functioning and correct height of burst.

"An impact fuze can be used on each drum instead of the XM 920EZ fuze to insure detonation, prevent duds and to preclude adherence to a definite altitude which is not always feasible in mountainous country.

"This operation, which constitutes the largest CS drop in Vietnam, was very successful. In future drops consideration should be given to CS-2 as the agent of choice; the target weather must be considered (monsoon season reduces effectiveness) and the target should be such as to preclude any other means of egress into or out of the area."

Psychological Operations

A small program of psychological operations was conducted toward the end of the campaign in the area west and north of Dak To. Its purpose was to create dissatisfaction and to cause desertion among NVA units.

A total of 108 psyops missions were flown in support of the Task Force for Operation MATHEWS, the Army ground operation, in the TRUSCOTT WHITE campaign. These missions dropped 2,200,000 leaflets and made 140 hours of taped loudspeaker broadcasts. In addition, psyops personnel conducted 82 hours of live broadcasts over known and suspected enemy locations.
7/

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During the operation, three NVA soldiers rallied to the Allied cause. These individuals provided unit identification, personalities, and locations of units, which were promptly exploited by psyops teams. The Chieu Hoi's (ralliers) wrote leaflets and made tapes urging their comrades to rally; their reasons for rallying were B-52 strikes, suffering, ^{8/} and the hardships of life in the jungle.

CHAPTER V

GROUND OPERATION

On 27 May 1968, the Army began the first phase of Operation MATHEWS, using a Task Force consisting of the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, and the 3d Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division, under the command of the Assistant Division Commander of the 4th Infantry Division. The area of operation encompassed Dak Pek, Dak To, and the area west, to the Cambodian/Laotian border. Operation MATHEWS was the Army ground operation within TRUSCOTT WHITE, and was notable for the unusually close air support rendered by ARC LIGHT strikes. The B-52s were employed against the enemy troop concentrations in the mountains west of Ben Het. ^{4/}

Col. Joseph E. Fix, Commander of 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, ^{1/} gives the following account of the ground offensive:

"I would point out that on 'D' day we went in and seized our initial objectives, hills 990 and 900, which gave me the shoulders of the penetration. It was planned the next day to jump deep, very close to the Laotian Border and put a battalion in there which in effect would pose two problems to the enemy. He could either turn himself out of position and fight this new threat or he could stay in position and bring in heavy reinforcement. Either way, it would be to our advantage. Unfortunately on the night of D-day... Dak Pek erupted. So the third brigade of the 101st Air Cav, which had been sent into this area and had been holding my rear bases so that my brigade could carry the fight to the enemy, was diverted northward (to Dak Pek) within a period of 24 hours. Therefore, I had to stand down a lot of my offensive operations, pick up these bases that were left uncovered and could then only make an attack that day that was very shallow in effect.

"We set up a line, but we never had the strength to go deep. A crucial point of the operation that tends to be forgotten, is that we were never able to get the deep objective which would have trapped a larger part of them in a pocket. We intended to take the shoulders on D-day, go deep on D+1 and then, depending on how the hell he reacted, I had the 4th Battalion cocked, on the original plan, to jump right in the middle of them. This would have effectively demolished the 325 Charlie Division except for that damn Dak Pek incident. And, interestingly enough, after we got Dak Pek stabilized, and I did get some forces back from there, and I was getting ready to go deep for the second time, in fact, deeper than we had anticipated originally because I had been attacking over the ground and my forward bases were now closer to the border. Again, I had done my preliminary reconnaissance, we brought in air-strikes and artillery, softening up the objective area. I had deployed troops into fire base 18 with artillery to give me more adequate artillery support. I was going in the very next morning but Dak Pek erupted again that night and the battalion that was to make the assault was diverted and I had to go up to Dak Pek... So the most frustrating thing about this operation was that two times when we could have really nailed this guy (the enemy), I had to divert forces because of requirements elsewhere... Now let me give some casualty figures as to the effectiveness of the campaign. Because as has been pointed out, this was the most concentrated use of air power, next to Khe Sanh, I guess in the history of warfare. As opposed to that, the TET offensive, which was country-wide, there was a minimum of air support resources. My records, available to me in my brigade, and I can only stress that they are authentic, are these: that from the period 12 Oct 1967... until 24 Apr 68, the confirmed enemy killed in action that this brigade had totaled were 1,241. There were 25 prisoners of war captured and some Hoi Chanks. Now in the period Apr through 23 June 1968, (about eleven weeks) we had 508 enemy killed, 13 captured and some Hoi Chanh's. But the point I want to make here is that in view of the tremendous amount of fire power that was expended in these 2-1/2 months, our kills didn't increase appreciably."

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The question has been raised as to why there was not a higher enemy kill during the campaign, and the answer can only be conjectured. It is a fact that the enemy endured terrible punishment, in spite of his frantic efforts at complete mobility and concealment. As was pointed out earlier, BDA was very sketchy, with hardly any ground follow-up, while the heavy bombardment of the enemy positions was taking place.

Nevertheless, during Operation MATHEWS, the 4th Infantry Division After Action Report shows 352 enemy killed, 141 individual weapons and 19 crew-served weapons captured. Friendly casualties during this period (24 May - 12 June) were 39 killed-in-action and 274 wounded. There were 309 fighter missions flown for a total of 661 fighter sorties. In the area west of Dak Pek, there were 31 ARC LIGHT missions flown against enemy troops, which were threatening to overrun the camp. As a result of these strikes, the enemy was able to launch only one ineffective ground attack on the friendly positions.
5/

The 4th Infantry Division After Action Report summarized the effectiveness of airpower in this operation:
6/

"In summary, it is apparent that the mass employment of ARC LIGHT strikes played a major role in the decisive defeat of elements of two NVA Divisions in Operation MATHEWS. Although extensive efforts were made to assess bomb damage, no single target strike could have proved to have produced dramatic results. Taken in sum, however, the evidence of their effect is conclusive. The enemy made a major effort during this operation, moving large forces for long distances to mass them against numerically inferior US forces; he introduced more sophisticated weapons systems than had been previously used in the Central Highlands, including artillery, and probably armor. Despite this major effort the

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enemy did not achieve one minor objective, but paid a staggering price in casualties and damage. Friendly casualties were very light by comparison when the results achieved are considered. The large number of ARC LIGHT were massed in a relatively small area where the enemy forces had to assemble to attack their objectives, and they were never able to organize a sustained attack."

The report continued with a summary for the action west of Dak To:^{7/}

"In the Dak To-Ben Het area the concept of operation called for the numerically inferior Allied forces to occupy the critical terrain in the area in strength, concentrating the division reconnaissance package in the area to find targets for exploitation of the friendly preponderance of fire power... Although large and determined enemy elements were known to have been present in the objective area prior to the preparation phase, US forces were able to complete three battalion air assaults into bold landing zones on D-Day without loss of a single US soldier. In operations following the US attack, ARC LIGHTS continued to be used in mass to complete the exploitation and to neutralize enemy fires. A total of 20 targets were attacked during this period, bringing the total for Operation MATHEWS in this area to 88."

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CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY OF AIR ACTION

There was a combined total of 2,648 Tactical Air and ARC LIGHT sorties, releasing 37,397 tons of bombs on the enemy in an 11-week period. (Fig. 6.)

This was an interdiction campaign against an enemy attempt to build a motorable road net, which was threatening the Central Highlands of Vietnam. The enemy was unable to mount an effective ground threat of a persistent nature. The campaign raised the possibility that the enemy could be denied access to any area where massive air attacks could be brought to bear. Accordingly, it had important effects upon the strategy for conducting ground operations in RVN.

The Air Force in TRUSCOTT WHITE, which the Army had termed "crucial" to the immediate ground situation, changed the entire nature of the battle. Around-the-clock bombardment by airpower reduced enemy traffic to a near standstill. The enemy was forced to move on foot rather than by trucks, and his supply efforts were drastically curtailed. Consequently, he was compelled to spend most of his time repairing roads and salvaging equipment; he was placed in a defensive position, rather than an offensive posture. His tediously constructed road network lay in ruins, pounded into uselessness by the combined efforts of airpower and artillery. With no place to hide, the enemy no longer enjoyed freedom of action, but was forced to react to constant harassment of the Allied bombardment. The constant joint Intelligence effort of the Air Force and Army, coupled

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with Visual Reconnaissance efforts of the Forward Air Controllers, kept continuous pressure on the enemy and forced him into a defensive posture.

The Air Force demonstrated in this campaign, as at Khe Sanh, that airpower defense, through offensive tactical and strategic interdiction and close air support, is essential and effective.

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

TOTAL B-52 SORTIES

1,261 Sorties

28 tons per sortie-35,308 tons
or
70,616,000 pounds

TACTICAL AIR

1,387 Total Tactical Air Sorties

2,089 Total Tonnage by Tactical
Air

72% of Tac Air Controlled by FACs

GRAVEL OPERATIONS

(XM-41 Mines)

116 Sorties Total

28% Tac Air Controlled by
COMBAT SKYSPOT

84 Sorties on "Charlie" Route

FIGURE 6

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FOOTNOTES

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5. Ibid.
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CHAPTER II

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10. (S) Interview with Major Carnahan, Doc. 7.
11. (C) Operational Rpt - Lessons Learned.

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2. Ibid.
3. (S) Dak To Air Offensive Narrative Rpt, Doc. 3.
4. (S) ARC LIGHT Strikes - TRUSCOTT WHITE, Doc 5.
5. (S) Dak To Air Offensive Narrative Rpt, Doc. 3.
6. (S) Interview with Major Carnahan, Doc. 7.
7. (S) Interview with Major Burke, Doc. 8.

CHAPTER IV

1. (S) Operational Rpt, 4th Inf Div, 14 Apr-6 Jul 68, Doc. 9.
2. (S) Rpt, MACV, Gravel Operations; Gravel Seeding XM-41, 23 Apr-12 Jun 68, Doc. 10.
3. (S) Interview with Major Carnahan, Doc. 6.
4. (C) Rpt, COC-7, MACV, "CS Drum Drops", undated, Doc. 11.
(C) Rpt, COC-7, MACV, "Comments and Observations on CS Drops", undated, Doc. 12.
5. Ibid.

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7. (C) Operational Rpt - Lessons Learned, Doc. 8.
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CHAPTER V

1. (S) Interview with Colonel Fix, Doc. 5.
2. (S) Dak To Air Offensive Narrative Rpt, Doc. 2.
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GLOSSARY

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| ARDF | Airborne Radar Direction Finding |
| BDA Bde | Bomb Damage Assessment Brigade |
| CBU CIDG COC | Cluster Bomb Unit Civilian Irregular Defense Group Combat Operations Center |
| DASC DMZ DOD | Direct Air Support Center Demilitarized Zone Department of Defense |
| EW | Early Warning |
| FAC FSB | Forward Air Controller Fire Support Base |
| LRRP | Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol |
| MACV | Military Assistance Command, Vietnam |
| NVA | North Vietnamese Army |
| OPlan | Operations Plan |
| POL | Petroleum, Oil, and Lubricants |
| Psyops | Psychological Operations |
| Recon | Reconnaissance |
| Regt | Regiment |
| RVN | Republic of Vietnam |
| SAC | Strategic Air Command |
| TASS | Tactical Air Support Squadron |
| VR | Visual Reconnaissance |